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## THIRD GRADE.

GUDRUN THORNE-THOMSEN.

## REVIEW: THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH.

THE average age of the children in our third grade is nine years. Their oral language expresses well their thoughts; with few exceptions they speak correctly, using a varied and fairly large vocabulary. Undoubtedly, the home training accounts for this power; the correct language heard at home, the continual corrections by the parents, and the reading of good literature, are reflected in the children's speech.

The problem of teaching a child the use of good English is, after all, not so burdensome a task. The absolute need for oral expression, the constant use of it under the impulse of intrinsic thought, and the fact that the child is surrounded by it continually, so to speak, cause a child of three years to conquer most of the difficulties. If it were possible to give written language the same impulse of necessity and constant use for the expression of thought, might not results be looked for different from those we actually get after eight years of school training?

The children who entered the third grade last October had very little power to express themselves by writing. Most of them had gained some technique in the forming of letters and spelling of words, but to none of them was writing a means of expressing thought. Helplessly they asked: "What shall I write?"

It has been the aim of the teacher to give the children, during school hours, as many opportunities as possible to feel the need of writing, and to cause them to use it constantly for reasons they themselves would think valid.

Written expression has been used in the following instances:

1. Note taking: (*a*) while experimenting, (*b*) while on excursions, (*c*) while studying books.
2. Notes written up to present to class.
3. Dictation: (*a*) recipes for cooking, (*b*) directions for experiment.

4. Child's own desire to write on a certain subject.
5. Invitations; letters.
6. To help in discussions; to prove opinions.
7. To give directions for work to other children.

1. Note taking: Usually each child performs an experiment different from that of every other child in the class; and each one desires to compare his results with those of the other children.

Examples:

(a) January 15: Apple weighed 125 grams. I cut it into small pieces. I left it to dry.

January 22: Apple weighed 26 grams; 99 grams gone.

(b) Visit to flour mill: Freight car full of wheat. Unloaded 1,000 bushels in fifteen minutes. Wheat carried up in small cars on a belt. Cleaned in six different machines. Crushed and sifted. Funny elevator. Machine to catch dust. Men loaded freight car with sacks of flour. 500 barrels in one car. 100,000 lbs. flour = 2,250 bushels of wheat.

(c) Lincoln: Born in Kentucky. Grandfather killed by Indians. Little, old log cabin. People could not read much then.

## 2. Notes written up to present to class.

Rice: First I took one-fourth cup of rice and put it into a pan with one-half pint of water, and boiled it. Before it was cooked it weighed 54 grams, and after it was cooked it weighed 167 grams. Before the little kernels of rice were cooked they were very hard, and after they were cooked they were very soft. The water that the rice was cooked in acted just like the starch which we use in the laundry. We starched some pieces of linen in the rice water and some in starch, and they were just alike. Both were stiff. We took some iodine and put it into the rice water, and it turned blue. That is the sign that it has starch in it.

4. The children have decided to bind all their written work and paintings into a book at the end of the year to give to their parents. Sometimes they suggest topics to write about, simply to tell of experiences which interest them. "First Signs of Spring" was suggested after a morning exercise on that subject:

I saw some pussy willows last Sunday. The temperature was 63° last Tuesday. That day the grass wasn't green. Then the night came and it rained, and it rained the next day, too. And the next day the grass was green on our lawn, and the crocuses were up.

5. After reading stories of Greek heroes, the children enjoy

discussing their comparative merits, and sometimes set forth in writing why they like a certain hero :

I like Theseus best, and I will tell you the reason. Theseus was brave ; he dared to fight the Minotaur. Theseus was strong ; for he rolled away the large stone. Theseus was unselfish ; for he was willing to be devoured by the Minotaur to save his friends. And he was loving to his father and mother.

#### 7. To give directions of work to other children.

If you have no starch and you want some, you can get fine starch this way: Take some potatoes and grate them. Put the grated potatoes into a bag of cheese cloth. Then you must put the bag into water and wash it and wash it till you can't get anything more out of it. Let the water stand for a day. Then pour it off carefully, and at the bottom of the dish you will find fine white starch.

In writing, the pupil needs many words which he cannot spell. The teacher either writes them on the blackboard, or the child looks them up in his " dictionary," a notebook in which each child writes the words he has misspelled or asked for in previous lessons. This dictionary, consisting of words which the child actually needs and uses constantly, has become a spelling-book, if so it may be called ; the children often take it home to learn the words.

After the written papers have been looked over and corrected by the teacher, it becomes necessary to give the class certain rules of syntax and grammar.

When a paper is read aloud and the class does not gain the thought which the writer desires to convey, a reconstruction of the language may be necessary. In this all members of the class assist. The use of punctuation marks is discovered, rules for the use of capitals, etc., are established.

Sometimes, while reading, the children notice different ways by which the same thought is expressed ; sometimes they observe beautiful expressions ; but, although the analysis of the literature which they read with regard to the language is not fully a conscious process, the constant reading of beautiful language undoubtedly helps to form their ideals and thus influences their own writing.